

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Redistricting Committee**

October 8, 2015

Red Clay District Office Board Room

Dr. Joe Pika, Co-chair, called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Joe Pika introduced the new committee member, Michael Calhum, a parent in the Red Clay Consolidated School District. Dr. Pika had the committee members each introduce themselves to Mr. Calhum.

The committee approved the minutes from the meeting on September 24 with two corrections.

Dr. Pika asked Dr. Dan Rich, Wilmington Education Improvement Commission Policy Director, to discuss the process of reviewing school district boundaries. Dr. Rich explained that the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) staff was reaching out to each of the districts to confirm the existing boundaries based on a 2004 report done by IPA. These will be the baseline that will be used to redraw the boundaries.

Dr. Pika requested an update on the conversations going on within and between districts.

Kelli Racca began the discussion. She said that she and Ted Ammann have been working on creating a single document going forward that addresses each part of the WEIC Redistricting Plan Draft Outline. Christina is working on some internal planning which includes talking about unique programs, instruction, and what would Christina do if it was just Christina involved, and what can they do to collaborate with Red Clay. They are working on discussing special education transitions, and making any transitions as smooth as possible for students. The two districts are also working to share data.

Kelli Racca also discussed the issue with Christina's high schools. While Red Clay is concerned about population increases, Christina is concerned about population decreases, particularly in the high school. It will also be important to bring the instructional staff into the conversation to discuss these curriculum pieces. There has been a lot of conversation around the planning process. It is also important to discuss the need to transition the families smoothly as the transition begins. They are scheduled to provide a board update on October 13 and are planning a board workshop at the end of the month.

Ted Ammann added that Red Clay is planning to have a School Board meeting early November so that the Board can have some input in the Red Clay plan. He explained the transition timeline challenges. The choice process begins in September, so in order to have a smooth transition, all of the changes in programming would need to be determined by September in order to provide complete and accurate information for families to participate in the choice process. This is a very quick turn around. He stated that they do not want to delay the work, but potentially stretch it in order to get it done right.

Dr. Rich commented that the original plan was for the 2016-17 school year to be a time of intensive planning and development for the beginning of implementation to start in the fall of 2017. If good changes and improvements can not be made along this timeline, the timeline might need to be changed. Assuming the State Board of Education approves the plan, it is likely that no action on the part of the General Assembly will take place until June 30, 2016. If district decisions have to be made by September or October of the year prior to implementation, it might be necessary to roll out the changes differently, so that the district can consider new and innovative programs. If it is possible to smooth out the implementation process for all districts involved, including the staffing and development of new programs, that is a good thing.

Dr. Pika commented that stretching out the timeline better captures the principle of being minimally disruptive.

Dr. Pika introduced the week to week summary that was handed out to committee members. This week to week summary may be replaced by the expanded discussion of the items included in the document being prepared by the districts.

Dr. Rich explained that the document created by Red Clay and Christina has been informing the way the commission plan will be structured and written. He said that within a few weeks the Committee should have components of the Commission's plan drafted for the committee to start considering and reviewing.

Dr. Harper reflected that this document will come to the committee from the IPA drafting team, not directly from the districts so that the Committee can discuss each of the items.

Dr. Rich answered that what is being brought to the IPA team from the districts will be incorporated into the draft of the Commission plan, which will come to the Committee to review and be re-drafted before going to the Commission.

Dr. Pika asked if there were any updates from Colonial School District and Brandywine School District.

Ralph Ackerman, Brandywine School Board, said that on Monday night there will be a work session of the School Board, and this work will be a topic of discussion. He will provide an update on all of the discussions being had at the Commission and the Committees.

One challenge faced by districts is the impact of charter school bills on the local tax base.

Dr. Blakey, Colonial School District Superintendent said that the School Board is meeting next Tuesday. They will be providing an overview of what has been going on at the Commission and Committee meetings. They are in the process of pulling data on how their students are performing now and how they might be performing once they move. The question that they are looking at is whether or not the City of Wilmington Colonial students will benefit in this move.

Ted Laws, Colonial School Board, mentioned that one other concern is whether these students will continue to travel the same distance they are now after the move.

Dr. Blakey mentioned that the question is what is going to be best for those 200 kids as they are right now. If Colonial schools are outperforming, and they could be traveling the same distance or more after the move, does it make sense for our students to leave our district?

Ted Laws mentioned a concern about some special programs, including programs for athletes. The eligibility process is important, and that is something many students in Colonial undertake. It is important for the Committee to ensure that the proper options are in place in the districts that the students are moving to, and that the transition is smooth. He explained the importance of considering each of these concerns thoroughly, and asked if the athletic programs have been considered.

Ted Ammann said that it has not yet been discussed, but is something else to consider. He mentioned the importance of considering all program impacts.

Dr. Pika asked Jill Floore, Co-chair of the Funding Student Success Committee, to discuss where that committee is.

Jill Floore explained that the Funding Committee has approached the work in two parts. Part A is how the structure of the funding system needs to change in order to improve the system alongside these redistricting recommendations. They have had discussions about whether or not the unit system is best, and have found that for the most part the unit system works effectively but it has holes that need to be addressed. Delaware is one of the only states that does not have an appropriation for English language learners or low-income students. She addressed an example which provides a weighted unit formula. The important idea to understand is that it is possible to make a decision that can focus more on elementary, because whole elementary schools feed into middle and high schools which have much larger populations. A low-income student can feed from an elementary school with a high concentration of low-income students into a middle or high school with a lower concentration due to the higher student population. Those low-income students do not need any fewer supports at the middle and high school levels. They are looking at a .15 weighted unit, which is lower than most states but will have a high fiscal note so it might not be possible to go higher. There is no right number, so they are trying to decide what is most realistic and what will actually create a benefit for students. The Funding Committee has had the conversation that the unit is a state/local split, and has begun to discuss what this means for School Boards, and what this means for the local share of funding. This has not yet been resolved.

Jill Floore emphasized that the committee has strongly endorsed the idea of reassessment. They have begun to discuss the problems arising if reassessment is not done, specifically the impacts on the equalization formula. She explained that under the current system, the districts

have to go to referendum for inflation and basic needs because the formula does not adjust itself.

Jill Floore then explained that Part B is the redistricting piece, and the physical transition of schools and students. They are starting with exchanging data to understand how many students and how much revenue Christina would lose, and how many students and how much revenue Red Clay would gain. They have discussed the mechanisms that would be available from the state side to balance the impact on tax payers, because there should be no disproportionate impact on tax payers from either district. This would include the approximately 2,500 students moving from Christina to Red Clay, and the additional students that are in charter schools for which the bills would transfer to Red Clay. Including those charter students, it is closer to 4,000 students. The next step is looking at the students, the types of students and their funding needs, including students in private placement. Red Clay's local per pupil funding is higher, and how the funding committee can make recommendations to balance that out.

Dr. Rich explained the more immediate funding needs. He explained that there is a component needed for the 2016-17 year, presuming approval. While the transition period can change, some of the funding will be needed right away. He explained that while the WEAC report recognizes a preference for a weighted funding formula, the Funding committee has identified that the existing arrangement can be modified to better serve students without creating this new system. WEAC endorsed both HB117 and HB30, but the Committee has identified some modifications that need to be made. It is important to discuss the best way to roll out state funding for this new low-income and ELL unit state-wide. Jill Floore explained that it they will also need to answer the local tax question, and the impact on the debt services.

A question was asked if there has been any discussion about removing certain items from the unit count, including nurses, counselors, psychologists.

Jill Floore said that there are multiple ways to get to the same goal. There is a task force that is looking at these needs globally. The Red Clay union president sits on the Funding Committee and he does not think that what we are looking at is enough. No one has agreed on the weights here, for right now they are just an example. If we were to start with a .15 multiplier, over time, as more funds become available, we might be able to increase that to .2 and allow the funds to be spread more evenly. She would not be surprised if this item was pressed.

Dr. Rich said that an important piece right now is the acceptance of the idea as a whole, and then they can work on the details.

Jill Floore mentioned that the committee has not fully connected with the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty committee. They are looking at global funding, allowing the educators to decide how best to use the units. There have been suggestions about more flexibility. She mentioned that they will help the Meeting the Needs of Students in Poverty Committee, and the other committees, to put price tags on their suggestions. She reminded the group that the

document is just an example of a low-income unit, that there would also be a weight for English language learners.

Mark Holodick, Brandywine Superintendent, said that he appreciates the conversation about the funding following the student in need, which seems consistent with how school choice is done. He asked if the committee has moved away from the dollars being dedicated to particular schools, because it seems that the money would follow the child.

Jill Floore explained that one of the concerns the committee is working to address is that similar students at schools with different concentrations of poverty would not necessarily receive the same amount of funding. Some formulas would completely eliminate secondary schools from receiving funding. The committee has made strong recommendations that the funding should follow the student.

A question was asked about how much overlap there is between schools with high low-income concentrations and schools with high concentrations of English language learners.

Jill Floore explained that it is important to review that carefully, but that there is a significant amount of overlap, but the needs are very different, which is the reason they are recommending a multiplier. The committee is looking at other high needs, including the issues of trauma that are often associated with poverty. These needs are compounded, which would be addressed by using a multiplier.

Bob Silber, Chief Financial Officer for the Christina School District and member of the Funding Student Success Committee, clarified a point made about capital improvements. He emphasized that the discussion of this funding should not be taken to mean that the school buildings in the Christina School District are not in an appropriate condition for students. The same thing has been discussed about technology; Christina is currently providing adequate, or more than adequate, technological supports for students, and the discussions around these items should not to be misinterpreted.

Bob Silber also explained that the items being discussed are unit level, not down to the student. He used the example of Charter School bills which are actually calculated at the student level. The formulas the committee is discussing is for units at the school level. One thing that is being discussed is banding, which would allow for a potentially different unit for middle schools and high schools. He also warned the group about starting low and assuming that the number will grow. If actual costs are not identified, it might not ever happen.

Dr. Pika said that it is important to identify immediate transition costs, and add more as the changes come closer.

Dr. Pika discussed the working relationship between Red Clay and Christina staff. He identified that Christina and Red Clay have discussed having Christina continue to provide transportation

for the students that are grandfathered in. He clarified that transportation is not provided for typical cross-district choice students.

Ted Ammann described the process of making decisions through the generation of the district plans. He said that there are items that are specific to Christina and items specific to Red Clay, and then some cross over. He asked whether the committee would be agreeing with the decisions that come out of the working group, and voting on those items that the two districts do not agree on.

Dr. Pika explained that the meeting on October 29 is a critical meeting where the committee will be able to review portions of the plan. If someone on the committee has an objection to an agreed upon item, it would be important for the working groups to know. He asked whether anyone on the committee was uncomfortable with providing transportation for students who choose to stay in their current program, as the law stipulates, while the district currently does not provide transportation for typical choice students.

Ted Ammann said that this is one of the interpretations of “minimally disruptive” as it is written in the law. He explained that requiring the grandfathered student to provide their own transportation would not be minimally disruptive. Merv Daugherty said that if the students want to stay at their current schools, they should be given the opportunity to do that.

Dr. Harper said that the committee’s discussion goes back to following the intent of the law. The districts should continue developing the plans, collaborating, and making decisions unless a red flag is raised by the committee.

Ted Ammann said that at the next meeting they will come forward with the decisions that have been made, and the decisions that have not yet been agreed upon for discussion.

Dr. Harper said that the information should come from the drafting team at the Institute for Public Administration to be able to have an unbiased discussion at the meeting.

Dr. Pika asked for agreement on “minimally disruptive” as it relates to Christina School District providing transportation to those students grandfathered in to allow them to stay in their current school.

Dr. Holodick said that there is no choice other than to provide transportation for those students that choose to stay in their current program.

Dr. Pika asked the group to consider the transfer of buildings and programs. The discussion stemmed around when these transitions should happen, and what is best for the students and for the planning process. A question was asked about whether Red Clay would continue these programs.

Kelli Racca explained that some of these conversations might extend into next year, allowing them to take the time required to make decisions in the best interest of the students. She explained that that is one of the conversations being held. Some programs both Christina and Red Clay have, so Christina would relocate those, but some are unique and that is where the districts are collaborating and figuring out how to resolve the difference. This is why we are approaching each program individually.

Dr. Pika said that the next topic is governance responsibilities, and whether the redistricting recommendations have any ramifications for board governance.

The Christina School District has a nominating district in the city, and the representative was just elected to a five-year term. It was noted that the Board of Elections redrew the nominating district boundaries after the last census, and they do so to balance the district populations. They should do this again after this process.

The Red Clay Consolidated School District has two nominating districts in the City of Wilmington, one wholly within city limits and one that includes both city and suburban areas.

Dr. Pika asked about the impact on Colonial and Brandywine. The answer was that Colonial has seven and that would not be impacted by the loss of the city of Wilmington students, and if Brandywine were to absorb the Colonial students that would become a part of the current city nominating district.

A question was asked about whether or not there would be an unbalanced representation for the City of Wilmington if Red Clay would take on Christina's portion in the City without any change in the size of the board. For example, Indian River has ten board members and it seems to work. Dr. Pika suggested getting advice from the Board of Elections would be a good idea.

A suggestion was made to consider having representation of the Wilmington City Government or the Charter School Network, in order to foster conversation.

Dr. Pika explained that one of the recommendations of WEAC was to create a charter school collaborative, and that there is a committee of WEIC looking at the issues of Charter and District Collaboration.

Dr. Pika said that there have been conversations between the districts and the unions about personnel, and that Jeff Taschner will have some discussions with the local unions. He discussed that one of Christina's concerns is to find a way to reassure their employees that this will not be continually disruptive to their lives, so they do not have to live in constant fear for their jobs. The issue is how do we provide a context of fairness for the employees who will be affected by this change.

The different unions affected were discussed.

Merv Daugherty explained that good conversations have been held to discuss these items. The discussions have been around timeline and fairness, and the issues with the contracts. It is also important to remember the students throughout the process. Red Clay has experience with a process that will work for this change, as well, that has been shared with both DSEA and the Christina Education Association.

Jeff Taschner explained that while DSEA is involved, it will ultimately be up to the local unions who own the contracts. He explained that there will be a meeting with Christina and Red Clay and he will provide an update to the committee.

Merv Daugherty explained that the district is trying to be as transparent, open, and fair as possible.

Dr. Pika asked about the transition costs.

Ted Amman said that there have been different discussions going on, but after the staffing process, there might be some employees that will not come over to Red Clay. Christina has proposed some funding to smooth that transition. He believes that the Christina staff is largely very talented, and a large portion of the staff members will move to Red Clay. Some might choose not to, and some might not fit the new programming that will be developed by Red Clay.

Jeff Taschner explained that one of the most difficult decisions is the pay scale. Another issue will be the issue of seniority, and the way to meld seniority lists in a way that is fair to both sides. Typically, when a staff member chooses to move, they recognize that in doing this, they lose tenure. This change in employers is not necessarily voluntary so it will not be seen as fair for them to lose their tenure. He also clarified the misconception about tenure; it does not guarantee a job and if the district does their job right, they can get rid of an employee when necessary.

Dr. Pika said that it makes sense that funds might be set aside to cover the Christina personnel that are not absorbed by Red Clay. A number has not been determined, the highest would be \$20 million, but it is not expected to be that high.

Kelli Racca explained that there is always the option to transfer internally when there are vacancies.

Bob Silber explained that the dialogue has been around schools with high concentrations of poverty, which include many Christina Schools outside of the city. With some of the expected changes there might be increased opportunities elsewhere in the district, many staff will be hired by Red Clay, and there are typically several vacancies that would need to be filled. The group will not be able to get an exact number, but they can estimate. It is important that this issue is discussed at the forefront.

Merv Daugherty explained the challenge with the timeline as it was written.

Dr. Pika explained that while discussions need to be held, we need to determine a timeline and a process and all details do not need to be worked out.

Dr. Pika said that he, along with Dan and others, will be presenting to the State Board at their next meeting, and will also meet with them during their retreat in November to discuss the progress on the plan.

Dr. Pika opened it up to public comment.

Bill Doolittle said that there needs to be additional funding for low-income and ELL students in the plan. Anything less than actually putting the funding needs for children in poverty and English Language learners would be a failure.

Dr. Harper explained that at the presentation to the State Board, a major focus will be what will be in the plan and how the plan will improve student success, as this was a major concern of theirs.

The next meeting of the Committee will be on October 29, 2015. The Committee said that they would prefer to meet at the Red Clay District Office again, if possible. Merv Daugherty said that he would make the necessary arrangements.

The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

**Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Redistricting Committee
Attendance at the 10/8 Meeting**

Redistricting Committee Members

Joe Pika
Henry Harper
Michael Calhm
Mark Holodick
Dan Rich
Merv Daugherty
Ted Ammann
Vicki Gehrt

Harrie Ellen Minnehan
Kelli Racca
Jill Floore
Leah Davis
Joseph T. Laws
Ralph Ackerman
Dusty Blakey
Jeff Taschner

Members of the Public

Laura Nash
Bill Doolittle
Bob Silber

Tom Filo
Kirsten Olson
Melissa Froemming

Institute for Public Administration Staff

Dan Rich
Elizabeth Burland